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"All the words that I command thee to speak unto them; diminish not a word."—JER. 26: 3.

"Preach the gospel to every creature."—MARK 16: 15.

"Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."—MATT. 28: 20.

# A MESSAGE TO MINISTERS.

THE CHARACTER AND DUTY

OF A

## CHRISTIAN PREACHER.

BY DAVID BOSTWICK, A.M.

PREACHED AT PHILADELPHIA, BEFORE THE SYNOD OF NEW-YORK, MAY 26, 1758.

— ON PREACHING CHRIST,

AND ON

Particular and Experimental Preaching.

BY THE REV. JOHN JENNINGS,

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"And he said unto me, Son of man, go, get thee unto the house of Israel, and speak with my words unto them." "But the house of Israel will not hearken unto thee."—EZEK. 3: 4, 7.

"For we are unto God a sweet savor of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish."—2 COR. 2: 15.

JOHN A. GRAY, PRINTER & STEREOTYPER  
16 & 18 Jacob Street, N. Y.



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BY DR. COTTON MATHER.

WHEN you are to preach, you should go directly from your knees in your study to the pulpit. Your sermon must also be such, that you may hope to have the blood of your Saviour sprinkled on it, and his good Spirit breathing in it. Among all the subjects with which you feed the people of God, I beseech you, let not the true bread of life be forgotten; but exhibit as much as you can of a glorious Christ unto them: yea, let the motto upon your whole ministry be, CHRIST IS ALL. The Holy Spirit of God for ever aims at nothing more, than what our Saviour has declared in that word, "he will glorify me;" and that Holy Spirit withdraws from the ministry which has in it little concern to glorify him; and it is, therefore, an unsuccessful ministry. What I wish for, and urge to, is this: that your knowledge of the mystery of Christ may conspicuously shine in your sermons; and that it may be esteemed by you as a matchless grace given you, if you may preach the unsearchable riches of Christ unto the world; yea, reckon that the truth is not well discerned, nor the word of truth well divided, until you have "the truth as it is in Jesus." Whatever point you are upon, think, what is there in my Saviour which this point leads me to think upon? When you preach on the duties of a godly, and sober, and righteous life, still carry your hearers to their Saviour, as not only affording a pattern for all those things, but also as offering to live, and act, and work in them, as a principle of life, by which alone they can live unto God. Be a star to lead men unto their Saviour, and stop not till you see them there. Assert always the necessity of turning, and living unto God; and yet such an impotency in the wounded and corrupt faculties of man, as renders a supernatural and regenerating work of sovereign grace necessary for it. Show the people of God how to take the comfort of their eternal election, and special redemption, and insured perseverance; and, at the same time, fetch mighty incentives to holiness from those hopes, which will for ever cause those that have them to purify themselves.

About the way of studying a sermon, I exhort you that all be with a spirit of piety, and therefore very prayerfully carried on. First look up to heaven, with dependence upon a glorious Christ, for his influences and assistances to carry you through what you have in hand. And when you have dispatched a paragraph of a sermon, I wish it might be a frequent practice with you to make a pause upon it: and get your sermon by heart; I mean, get your heart suitably touched with what you have prepared, before you go any further. To feel what you speak, how wondrously will it qualify you to be a lively speaker!

Be careful evermore to preach scripturally; and employ the sword of the Spirit, if you would hope to do execution. Pertinent Scriptures, demonstrating and embellishing every article, will well become one who would speak as the oracles of God.

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While he continued in his original state of moral rectitude, that God who was the author of his being was his beginning and end, his interest and attraction, his desire and delight, and, in a word, his all. But when sin took place in his heart, it warped the unhappy creature from his God to himself; insomuch that self is now become all to corrupt and depraved nature, even as God was once

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While he continued in his original state of moral rectitude, that God who was the author of his being was his beginning and end, his interest and attraction, his desire and delight, and, in a word, his all. But when sin took place in his heart, it warped the unhappy creature from his God to himself; insomuch that self is now become all to corrupt and depraved nature, even as God was once

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all to nature uncorrupted and undepraved. Selfishness is therefore now become the most active and reigning principle in fallen nature, and, like the first wheel in a grand machine, sets the whole world in motion. For if we survey the conduct of busy mortals, in the various ranks and degrees, characters and circumstances of life, we shall easily perceive that self is the idol they are naturally disposed to worship, and selfishness the grand interest to which they are by nature entirely devoted.

We find ourselves in the midst of an active, busy world, the inhabitants of which are ever engaged in some vigorous pursuits. But what are they pursuing? What is the governing principle of their actions? And what the center to which they bend, and in which they terminate? Are they laboring for God as their ultimate end, or for themselves? When the merchant compasseth sea and land, in search of a worldly treasure, does he this for God, or for himself? When the soldier boldly enters the field of battle, faces death in its most hideous forms, and opens his bosom to the most pregnant dangers, does he this for the honor of God, or for the honor of himself? When the industrious tradesman rises early, and sits up late, and eats the bread of carefulness, and fills up his swift succeeding hours with the most painful and assiduous labor, does he labor ultimately for God, or for himself? When men of superior rank, and greater affluence, devote their wasting moments to the fashionable diversions and pleasurable entertainments of life, do they this to please and glorify God, or to please and gratify self? In a word, what is it in general that men live for, and what are they doing in the world? What are their thoughts spent, their words spoken, their hands employed, and their time improved for? Is it for God, or themselves? Alas, how easy it is to see the awful prevalence of this corrupt and accursed principle! It is self that rules kingdoms, that governs families, drives on their trade, manages their worldly business; that chooses even their religion, and influences their whole conduct; that lies at the root and bottom of all their actual sins, makes them ungodly, and keeps them ungodly, and is their very ungodliness itself.

And, oh! that it might be said, with undoubted truth, that notwithstanding the general prevalence of this detestable principle, among the various ranks and orders of men, there is at least one order exempt from the general charge; and that none who sustain the sacred character, are influenced by mercenary principles, or selfish motives; but that each individual could safely adopt the language of the apostle, in behalf of himself and brethren: "We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord."

In the preceding chapter, the apostle had been magnifying his office, on account of the excellency and glory of that Gospel, which was the subject of it: and in this, he vindicates the ministry of the apostles and Gospel ministers, from the unjust accusations of false and Judaizing teachers, who had charged them with walking in craftiness, and handling the word of the Lord deceitfully. He avouches their sincerity, that they renounced the hidden things of dishonesty; and as a proof of their integrity, he assures them, that their business was to preach Christ, and not themselves. "We preach not ourselves, says he, and therefore are not a set of designing men, as our accusers would insinuate; self is neither the matter, nor the end of our preaching; we neither teach our own notions, passions, or prejudices, for the word of God, nor do we seek ourselves, or the advancement of our secular interest and glory: but we preach Christ Jesus the Lord, and endeavor to make him known to the world in each of these amiable characters, as Messiah, the Christ of God, as Jesus, the Saviour of men, and as Lord and King in his Church; and to advance the interest of his glorious kingdom among men."

From these words I shall attempt to show:

- I. What that selfishness is which the apostle here disclaims; or, when ministers may be said to preach themselves.
  - II. I shall consider some of the operations of that selfish principle, in those particular instances that tend to discover its reigning dominion. And then,
  - III. Show what it is to preach Christ Jesus the Lord.
- And lastly, improve the whole.

Let us then inquire,

I. What that selfishness is which the apostle here disclaims, etc. And to set this in a proper light, and prevent mistakes, I must observe negatively. 1st, It is not that regular self-love that induces ministers to zeal and faithfulness in the discharge of their sacred trust, from the consideration of future rewards and punishments. There is a self-love implanted in human nature that is consistent with complete rectitude, and therefore is not the effect of our moral depravity. This Adam had in his state of perfect innocence, or else the promises of rewards would have been no inducement to obedience, nor would the severest threatenings have deterred him, in any measure, from disobedience. It is not, therefore, a criminal selfishness, for ministers to have a suitable regard to their own future and everlasting interest, and to be influenced to diligence and industry, in their great important work, by motives drawn from those future and eternal realities. It was doubtless agreeable to the God of heaven, that Ezekiel the prophet should be influenced to faithfulness in giving warning, from that awful consideration, that the "blood of those that perished should otherwise be required at his hand." And when the apostle urged Timothy to "take heed to himself and his doctrine, and continue in them," he would have him influenced by these considerations, that he "should save himself, and them that heard him." Nor was even St. Paul entirely above the influence of this motive, when he gave this reason, why "he kept his body under subjection; lest, when he had preached to others, himself should be a cast-away." It was not an unreasonable selfishness in the prophet Isaiah to take encouragement under all his complaints, and be animated in his work, from the consideration that "though Israel was not gathered, yet he should be glorious in the eyes of the Lord."

2dly, This disclaiming ourselves does not imply a total disregard to our reputation and character among men; for on this the success of our ministry, and consequently the advancement of the Redeemer's kingdom, may, in some measure, depend. If the character of a Gospel minister is stained with false and ill-natured asper-

sions, this tends to mar his influence, and consequently his usefulness. It is therefore noways inconsistent with a Gospel self-denial, to seek a vindication of himself and his abused reputation. The apostle himself does so, in this and his other epistles; and says, no man shall stop him in this boasting. It ever becomes the ministers of Christ to have a tender regard to their reputation and character, as subservient to the great ends of their ministry, and in which the honor of Christ, and the interest of religion, is nearly concerned. It becomes a bishop to be blameless, and an officer in the Church of God to be of good report; yea, and to maintain the authority of his sacred character, "and let no man despise him." Indeed, if our reputation among men of carnal corrupt minds suffers for our faithfulness in the discharge of our sacred trust, and "men speak all manner of evil against us falsely for Christ's sake, (which is not at all uncommon,) in this case, our honor, interest, and reputation, and even life itself, is to be given up, and made a willing sacrifice to the honor and interest of Jesus Christ; "not counting our own life (much less our name and reputation) dear, that we may finish our course, and the ministry we have received of the Lord Jesus."

But, secondly, and positively, the selfishness here disclaimed is, in general, that which stands in direct opposition to the honor of God, and the interest of Jesus Christ. That sets up self in the room and place of God, in our estimation, affections, intentions and pursuits; and disposes us to love and value ourselves in the same manner as we ought to love and value the God of heaven; to prefer our honor to his honor, and our interest to the interest of Jesus Christ; and in a word, to regard ourselves supremely, and seek ourselves ultimately and finally, and to be influenced inordinately, in one shape or other, by mercenary views, and selfish motives in all we do. It is, therefore, nothing less, on the whole, than a direct contending with the God of heaven, and maintaining a dispute with him who shall be most loved and regarded by us, he or we, and whose honor and interest shall be primarily and ultimately pursued, his or our own.

But more particularly, this selfishness in public preach-

ing may be considered both materially and formally; or as it respects the subject matter, and the formal manner, of our preaching.

1st, Then, ministers may be said to preach themselves, when the matter of their public preaching is such that it tends rather to promote self-honor and self-interest than the honor of God, and the interest of Jesus Christ. When the substance of their sermons is only "the enticing words of man's wisdom, calculated rather to gratify men's curiosity with pleasing speculations, than to pierce their hearts with pungent convictions; and has a greater tendency to please their fancies than to convert and save their souls. When, in the matter of their preaching, they conform to men's vitiated taste and corrupt humors, and rather soothe and flatter than strive to awaken and alarm their consciences; endeavoring rather to win them to themselves, and gain them over to their own self-interest, than to win them to Christ and convert them to God. In a word, we are awfully guilty of this criminal selfishness when our sermons have rather a tendency, in their matter and composition to commend ourselves than to commend the Lord Jesus Christ; and to beget in the corrupt hearts of our hearers an esteem of our persons, gifts, and abilities, rather than of the person, glory, and offices of the great Redeemer, the ever adorable God-Man, Jesus Christ.

2dly, This selfishness respects the form as well as the matter of our preaching, that is, the governing principle from which we act in our public ministry, and the ultimate end we have in view. And this is doubtless the principal thing here intended; for be the matter of our preaching ever so good, yet self may be the root and bottom of it all, and the object of our principal aim. Nothing is more evident than that we may do the work of God, and that which is really so, as to the matter or thing done; and yet not do it for God, as to the formal manner, but rather for ourselves. Thus Jehu did the work of the Lord when he executed the vengeance of Jehovah on the house and family of wicked Ahab; and when he broke down the images of Baal, and restored Israel from idolatry; and yet he did it not for God, but

for himself, as appears by his proud boast, "come see my zeal for the Lord of Hosts."

It is not at all inconsistent to say, that ministers may calculate their sermons, both as a matter, method, and manner of delivery, so as to have an aptitude and tendency to answer the great ends of preaching, and yet may preach themselves, as to the principle from which they act, and the ultimate end they have in view. Nor is it at all to be wondered at, if in a time when the most zealous, lively, and practical preaching, the most earnest addresses to the heart and conscience are in vogue, and tend most to recommend the preacher, and promote his reputation, that mere selfish principles should induce men to attempt these, and even strive to excel therein. So that though we preach ever so well, as to the matter and method of our sermons, and with ever so much apparent zeal and fervor, in the delivery of them, yet if we fail as to the formal manner, and aim chiefly and ultimately at ourselves, our honor, interest, and reputation, we are found guilty of that criminal selfishness which the apostle disclaims; and are making idols of ourselves by treating ourselves in the manner we ought to treat the great God of heaven and earth. This is the selfishness here disclaimed, and this it is for men to preach themselves. I am

II. To consider some of the operations of this corrupt principle, in those particular instances that tend to discover its reigning dominion. In every unsanctified heart, self in one shape or other is ever uppermost, and has an entire ascendancy and governing influence in every thing they do. When, therefore, men of this character take upon them the office of the Gospel-ministry, self must be their grand motive, and their principal inducement. For, though a faithful discharge of this important trust requires more self-denial than any employment under the sun, yet there are many things in the sacred office that may be alluring baits to men of corrupt and selfish minds. A tolerable maintenance, or comfortable subsistence in the world, may be an inducement to such as know not better how to provide for themselves; who, like the unjust steward, are unwilling to dig and ashamed to beg, and therefore choose this rather than a meaner employment.

Thus, in the degenerate times of the Church of old, men would "crouch for a piece of silver, and say, Put me, I pray thee, into the priest's office, that I may eat a piece of bread." And hence that bitter complaint, that "the priests taught for hire, and the prophets divined for money;" and on this account they were called "greedy dogs that could never have enough, and shepherds that did not understand, looking every one for his gain from his quarter." Let none understand me as though I insinuated, that ministers have not a right to insist on a sufficient maintenance and an honorable support; for whatever a carnal selfish world may imagine, it will be found true at last, that God (and not man) "hath ordained that they who preach the Gospel should live of the Gospel." Nor do I in the least doubt, but the too general neglect of this duty among people to their ministers, is one of the crying and God-provoking sins of the present day. (See Mal. 3 : 8, 9, 10.) What I am proving is, that self, in its reigning dominion, may influence men to undertake the sacred employment with such sordid views. And this is necessarily supposed, in the apostle's frequent exhortations to ministers, "not to be greedy of filthy lucre, nor be given to filthy lucre, nor teach things for filthy lucre's sake." The inducement of the apostle himself (as of every other faithful minister) was vastly different. A necessity, says he: "is laid upon me, and woe is me if I preach not the Gospel." And he could say, with the utmost sincerity to the Corinthian Church, "I seek not your's, but you."

Again, a life of study, and an opportunity to furnish the mind with the various improvements of human science, may be an inducement to those who have a turn for speculation, and would be willing to shine and make some figure in literature, from mere selfish principles to undertake the ministry. And, would you believe it, sirs? The supposed ease and indolence of a minister's life, by those who know nothing of the many cares, fatigues, and perplexities of it, may possibly induce a selfish man, who is willing to favor the flesh, to enter upon it. Nor is it at all unlikely that the reverence and respect shown to the sacred character among men may influence those

who are chiefly seeking themselves. 'Tis agreeable to a proud, selfish mortal to be looked upon and respected as the leader and guide of the people, and to have others dependent on him, and "receive the law at his mouth."

Now, when such alluring baits as these are the principal inducements to the ministry, the reigning dominion of a selfish principal is exceedingly evident. And as these undertake the sacred employment for themselves, and not for God, so they will ever "preach themselves, and not Christ Jesus the Lord." For the same principle, while uppermost in their hearts, will attend and govern them in every branch of their ministerial conduct. It will go with them into their private studies, and there will choose their subject, form and methodize their sermons, and oftentimes make them more attentive to mere words and ornaments than to the sacred truths of God. And hence, instead of plain and serious addresses, that might tend to melt and change hard and unchanged hearts, they will abound with trifling speculations, set off with glittering toys, with figures of rhetoric, and arts of elocution. Or instead of instructing their people in the great things that concern their everlasting welfare, they go beyond their capacity, and teach them nothing but that they are able to speak unprofitably and unintelligibly. Self will often dispose them to take off the edge, and dull the life of their teachings, under a pretence of filing off the roughness, and smoothing the diction. And if a plain and cutting passage occurs, it will cast it away, as too rustical and ungrateful. Thus in their preparations for public service, instead of consulting seriously, "What shall I say, and how shall I say it, so as best to please and glorify God, and do good to the souls of men," self will make them consult, "What shall I say, and how shall I deliver it, so as to be thought an excellent preacher, and to be admired and applauded by all that hear me."

And when self has done its work in their study, and made their sermon, it will attend them even to the pulpit, and there it will form their very countenance and gesture, and modulate their voice, and animate their delivery, and put the very accent and emphasis upon their words and syllables that all may be calculated to



please rather than profit, and to recommend themselves and secure a vain applause, rather than recommend Jesus Christ, and secure his interest in the hearts of men.

And when the sermon is ended, self goes home with the preacher, and makes him much more solicitous to know whether he is admired and applauded, than whether he has prevailed for the awakening and conversion of souls. And so powerful is this principle in some, that they could even be glad in their heart (were it not for shame) to ask their hearers, in direct terms, whether they like, admire, and applaud their labors, and conceive a good opinion of them. But as this will not do, self will put them on some topic of conversation with their hearers, that will tend, if possible, to draw out their own commendation; and if they can perceive they are highly thought of, they rejoice greatly, as having attained their end. But if they find they are esteemed but weak, or at best but common preachers, they are dejected and disappointed, as having missed what they think the grand prize of the day.

And hence this false, self-seeking heart, can be very easy and contented with a general approbation and applause, without seeing any saving fruit of ministerial labor, from year to year. Or if he desire success in the awakening and conversion of sinners, yet self may lie at the bottom of this too: and though it may work differently from the manner above described, yet it may terminate in the same thing in the final issue. Self may make such as these strive to excel in appearances of real godliness, and in zealous, fervent, practical preaching; yea, it may dispose them to desire success, to affect and change the hearts of their hearers, and they may calculate their discourses for that purpose, and yet aim ultimately at themselves, and the advancement of their own reputation. What can be more agreeable to a man who ultimately seeks himself, than to see people throng around him, and crowd in multitudes to hear him, and appear to be affected with what they hear? And to find that he is able to command their attention, and move their passions and affections; and what more pleasing than to hear himself cried up by them, as the most able and godly

preacher in the land, and famed through the whole country as a man of the highest spiritual excellencies, and most successful labor.

I mean not to insinuate that men of such mercenary and corrupt principles are likely to be very successful, for though it is possible they may do good, and God may bless what means he pleases; yet it seems more probable, that, as they labor not for God, but for themselves, he will leave them to themselves for the success: and that their labors will have no greater blessing than themselves are able to give, and that their words, how pungent soever, will reach no farther than their own strength is able to make them. But what I have asserted is, that self may make men desire success, so far as it may tend to the advancement of their reputation. Again,

Sometimes this selfish disposition will work up envious and bitter thoughts against all those who they imagine stand in their light, or by out-shining them, eclipse their glory, and hinder the progress of their idolized reputation. Hence they are inwardly vexed and mortified, when a preference is given to the names and parts of their brethren, as if all the praise given to others was injuriously taken from them, and that they themselves were not so particularly noticed, respected, and esteemed as their partial selfish judgment imagines they ought to be. And this often lays a foundation for jealousy, suspicion, and alienation, as if they were carrying on two different and contrary interests. It is this also, that makes some so tenacious of their own opinions, that they almost claim infallibility, and are ever impatient of contradiction or control. They esteem and value the man that will say as they say, and be of their opinion, and promote their reputation; but he who will dare to differ from, or contradict them, is not to be borne with. O, sirs! it is impossible to trace out all the corrupt workings of this detestable and pernicious principle, or to mention the innumerable mischiefs it has occasioned in the Church of God. It was this that raised anti-christ, by several gradual and progressive steps, to his present tyrannical dignity. It was this that enkindled the flames of persecution, in the sev-

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Again, a life of study, and an opportunity to furnish the mind with the various improvements of human science, may be an inducement to those who have a turn for speculation, and would be willing to shine and make some figure in literature, from mere selfish principles to undertake the ministry. And, would you believe it, sirs? The supposed ease and indolence of a minister's life, by those who know nothing of the many cares, fatigues, and perplexities of it, may possibly induce a selfish man, who is willing to favor the flesh, to enter upon it. Nor is it at all unlikely that the reverence and respect shown to the sacred character among men may influence those

who are chiefly seeking themselves. 'Tis agreeable to a proud, selfish mortal to be looked upon and respected as the leader and guide of the people, and to have others dependent on him, and "receive the law at his mouth."

Now, when such alluring baits as these are the principal inducements to the ministry, the reigning dominion of a selfish principal is exceedingly evident. And as these undertake the sacred employment for themselves, and not for God, so they will ever "preach themselves, and not Christ Jesus the Lord." For the same principle, while uppermost in their hearts, will attend and govern them in every branch of their ministerial conduct. It will go with them into their private studies, and there will choose their subject, form and methodize their sermons, and oftentimes make them more attentive to mere words and ornaments than to the sacred truths of God. And hence, instead of plain and serious addresses, that might tend to melt and change hard and unchanged hearts, they will abound with trifling speculations, set off with glittering toys, with figures of rhetoric, and arts of elocution. Or instead of instructing their people in the great things that concern their everlasting welfare, they go beyond their capacity, and teach them nothing but that they are able to speak unprofitably and unintelligibly. Self will often dispose them to take off the edge, and dull the life of their teachings, under a pretence of filing off the roughness, and smoothing the diction. And if a plain and cutting passage occurs, it will cast it away, as too rustical and ungrateful. Thus in their preparations for public service, instead of consulting seriously, "What shall I say, and how shall I say it, so as best to please and glorify God, and do good to the souls of men," self will make them consult, "What shall I say, and how shall I deliver it, so as to be thought an excellent preacher, and to be admired and applauded by all that hear me."

And when self has done its work in their study, and made their sermon, it will attend them even to the pulpit, and there it will form their very countenance and gesture, and modulate their voice, and animate their delivery, and put the very accent and emphasis upon their words and syllables that all may be calculated to

please rather than profit, and to recommend themselves and secure a vain applause, rather than recommend Jesus Christ, and secure his interest in the hearts of men.

And when the sermon is ended, self goes home with the preacher, and makes him much more solicitous to know whether he is admired and applauded, than whether he has prevailed for the awakening and conversion of souls. And so powerful is this principle in some, that they could even be glad in their heart (were it not for shame) to ask their hearers, in direct terms, whether they like, admire, and applaud their labors, and conceive a good opinion of them. But as this will not do, self will put them on some topic of conversation with their hearers, that will tend, if possible, to draw out their own commendation; and if they can perceive they are highly thought of, they rejoice greatly, as having attained their end. But if they find they are esteemed but weak, or at best but common preachers, they are dejected and disappointed, as having missed what they think the grand prize of the day.

And hence this false, self-seeking heart, can be very easy and contented with a general approbation and applause, without seeing any saving fruit of ministerial labor, from year to year. Or if he desire success in the awakening and conversion of sinners, yet self may lie at the bottom of this too: and though it may work differently from the manner above described, yet it may terminate in the same thing in the final issue. Self may make such as these strive to excel in appearances of real godliness, and in zealous, fervent, practical preaching; yea, it may dispose them to desire success, to affect and change the hearts of their hearers, and they may calculate their discourses for that purpose, and yet aim ultimately at themselves, and the advancement of their own reputation. What can be more agreeable to a man who ultimately seeks himself, than to see people throng around him, and crowd in multitudes to hear him, and appear to be affected with what they hear? And to find that he is able to command their attention, and move their passions and affections; and what more pleasing than to hear himself cried up by them, as the most able and godly

preacher in the land, and famed through the whole country as a man of the highest spiritual excellencies, and most successful labor.

I mean not to insinuate that men of such mercenary and corrupt principles are likely to be very successful, for though it is possible they may do good, and God may bless what means he pleases; yet it seems more probable, that, as they labor not for God, but for themselves, he will leave them to themselves for the success: and that their labors will have no greater blessing than themselves are able to give, and that their words, how pungent soever, will reach no farther than their own strength is able to make them. But what I have asserted is, that self may make men desire success, so far as it may tend to the advancement of their reputation. Again,

Sometimes this selfish disposition will work up envious and bitter thoughts against all those who they imagine stand in their light, or by out-shining them, eclipse their glory, and hinder the progress of their idolized reputation. Hence they are inwardly vexed and mortified, when a preference is given to the names and parts of their brethren, as if all the praise given to others was injuriously taken from them, and that they themselves were not so particularly noticed, respected, and esteemed as their partial selfish judgment imagines they ought to be. And this often lays a foundation for jealousy, suspicion, and alienation, as if they were carrying on two different and contrary interests. It is this also, that makes some so tenacious of their own opinions, that they almost claim infallibility, and are ever impatient of contradiction or control. They esteem and value the man that will say as they say, and be of their opinion, and promote their reputation; but he who will dare to differ from, or contradict them, is not to be borne with. O, sirs! it is impossible to trace out all the corrupt workings of this detestable and pernicious principle, or to mention the innumerable mischiefs it has occasioned in the Church of God. It was this that raised anti-christ, by several gradual and progressive steps, to his present tyrannical dignity. It was this that enkindled the flames of persecution, in the sev-

eral periods of the Christian Church, and stained the earth with the crimson gore of human blood; and it is this disturbs and rends Christian societies, and divides them into different interests, and different parties, and fills them with bitterness against one another. "Oh! may the Lord in mercy deliver us from ourselves, as our worst enemy, and from the power and dominion of selfishness, as the sorest plague that can befall us on this side hell!"

But I have dwelt too long on this disagreeable subject, and shall therefore pass to the

Third general head, which was to show,

III. What it is to preach Christ. "We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord." All this also must be considered both materially, and formally, or as it respects the subject matter, and the formal manner of our preaching."

1st, As it respects the matter; it includes; in general, the whole sum of Gospel doctrine, relating to man's salvation by Jesus Christ; the original contrivance, the meritorious impetration, and actual application of it, through his blood and Spirit; the fall of man, "by one man's disobedience," and the guilt and ruin of a fallen state necessarily supposed; the original purpose of God's love and grace, that issued in the gift of his dear Son, the glory of his person as God, the eternal relation he sustained to the father, his substitution as a surety, and designation to the office of Mediator, his voluntary contract in the covenant of redemption, which made way for his mysterious incarnation, his holy life, his meritorious and cruel death, his powerful resurrection, triumphant ascension, and perpetual prevailing intercession; the complete atonement he made, and the everlasting righteousness he hath brought in; together with the various offices he sustained, both in his state of humiliation and exaltation: The methods of divine operation, in the work of effectual calling, the nature and use of divine faith, to apply his blood and righteousness; the blessings consequent on believing, justification, adoption, sanctification, perseverance in grace, and consummation in glory, perfection of holiness at death, and the complete happiness of soul and body at the resurrection, in the full enjoyment

of God to all eternity. These, and all other Gospel truths, supposed by them, included in them, and consequent upon them, relating to Jesus Christ, are to be the subject matter of our preaching; all which are summarily comprehended in the three characters mentioned in the text, Christ Jesus the Lord; Christ the Messiah, the anointed of God, qualified for, and set apart to, the office of Mediator; Jesus the Saviour of men, who saves his people from their sins, both from the guilt and power, and finally from the punishment of them, by working out for them a righteousness to be imputed; and by working in them a righteousness implanted, the Lord, the great head and king of his Church, who has its government on his shoulders, and to "whom all power is given in heaven and upon earth;" to whom all homage and obedience are due, and to whom is committed, as a person every way qualified and worthy, the sole management of the solemn transactions of the grand and final judgment.

But particularly, 1st, To preach Christ, is to hold him forth, not merely as a lawgiver, to be obeyed; but chiefly as a law-fulfiller, to be believed in, for pardon, righteousness, and everlasting life. To represent him to poor perishing sinners as surety, who has undertaken in their room and stead, to pay the debt of duty and of penalty, for which divine justice has them under an arrest; to atone for the crimes for which they are under sentence, and work out for them a complete and perfect righteousness, answerable to the strict demands of his unchangeable law. How honorably soever we may speak of Jesus Christ as a ruler to be obeyed, and as a pattern to be imitated, yet if we do not exhibit him to view as the great law-fulfiller, to be believed in, and as "the end of the law for righteousness," we do not properly preach Christ, but conceal a most essential branch of his mediatorial excellency. It is the grand fundamental article of the religion of Christ, and the ground of all our hopes, "that he suffered for us, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God; that he not only died for our good, (as the Socinians say, to set us an example how to suffer with patience;) but that he died "in our room and



stead," and was "made sin for us" by imputation, that we by imputation "might be made righteous in the sight of God through him."

2dly, To preach Christ, is to exhibit to view his infinite divine fullness, and the freeness of his unbounded grace, his almighty power to save, and his willingness to exert that power; that in him is to be found all that righteousness that the law requires, and all that grace that the Gospel promises; and, in short, that a poor, guilty, helpless, sin-burdened, and law-condemned sinner can possibly want; and that all the blessings of his atonement, are freely offered, "without money and without price."

3dly, To preach Christ, is to make him the grand centre of all the variety of subjects we enter upon, in the whole credenda and agenda of religion. If we treat of the nature and perfections of the Deity, we are to consider them as displayed most eminently "in the face of Jesus Christ." If we exhibit to view the divine law, in its strictness and spirituality, we are to remember Christ, "as the end of the law for righteousness." If we denounce its dreadful "curses against every one that continues not in all things written in the book of the law to do them;" it is that "the law, as a school-master, may bring them to Christ, that they may be justified by faith." If we treat of Gospel promises and Gospel blessings, we must consider them as purchased by the blood, and distributed by the bounty and grace of Christ. If we discourse upon divine faith, Christ must be considered as "the author and finisher," as well as the direct object of it. If we treat of repentance, it is "Christ exalted at the right hand of God" that must give it, and "the remission of sins;" and Christ crucified, and viewed by faith, that must be the first spring of it. If we treat of Gospel obedience, it must be considered as the genuine fruit of faith in Christ, and union to him; springing from "constraining love to," and performed by strength and grace derived from the Lord Jesus Christ; and accepted altogether on account of the merit of his obedience and death. In a word, Christ must be considered as "all and in all, as the alpha and omega, the beginning and the end;" the fountain from which all is derived and the

centre in which all must terminate; his righteousness is all in justification, his Spirit and grace all in sanctification, and the enjoyment of him all in glorification. This is to preach Christ, as to the matter of our preaching. And then,

II. As to the formal manner, it implies, that we aim at the honor and glory of Christ, and the advancement of his interest, as our ultimate and final end. This is doubtless the principal thing intended, in opposition to those mercenary views and selfish aims that were mentioned before. Men may speak much about Jesus Christ in their sermons, and yet not properly preach Christ: yea, they may preach Christ too, as to the matter of their preaching, in all the instances above described, and yet not do it for Christ, but for themselves. And thus they make Christ himself, and the precious doctrines of the Gospel, only subservient to the advancement of the grand idol, Self. To preach Christ, then, is to make his honor and interest the centre of all our labor and industry; the mark on which we fix our eye, and toward which we endeavor to steer in all our private studies and public administrations, and in every instance of our ministerial conduct. Our business is to commend Christ, and not ourselves; to win the hearts of men to him, and not to ourselves; and attach them to his interest rather than our own. And as this must be the ultimate, proposed end, so those means must be chosen that have the most natural tendency to accomplish it? even such methods and manner of address as will tend to pierce the obdurate hearts, and wound the stupid consciences of sleepy, secure sinners, by making them feel the ruin of their fallen state, their guilt and condemnation by the law, and the absolute impossibility of obtaining a personal legal righteousness; that they may effectually see their need of Christ, both as a surety to pay their law-debt, and as a "fountain to wash in from sin and from uncleanness."

The rich and unbounded treasures of Gospel grace, are also to be laid open, and Gospel invitations to be exhibited in their free and indefinite terms, urged with the most powerful motives and persuasive arguments that can be

drawn from love or from wrath, from heaven or from hell; and from all the glorious and dreadful things of an unseen and eternal world.

Let me now endeavor to improve this subject by an inference or two from each of the principal foregoing heads; and then conclude with a particular application. And,

1st, If ministers are not to preach, or to seek themselves, in the execution of the sacred office, then none can ever discharge this important trust acceptably in the sight of God who are under the reigning dominion of mercenary and selfish principles. I have observed before, that when man fell from God by original apostasy, he retired as it were into himself, and is ever since disposed supremely to love, and ultimately to seek himself, as his last and final end. Selfishness, then, in one shape or another, is now the reigning, active principle in fallen nature, and has the entire dominion in every heart that is unrenewed and unsanctified; as, therefore, unsanctified men have no governing principle but self, and can act from no higher principles than they have, how can they be qualified for a faithful discharge of that work which requires so much self-renunciation? If such as these undertake the ministry, their views must be altogether selfish: they study, pray, and preach for themselves, and make themselves the grand centre of all they think, and speak, and do! "Seeking their own things," and not the things of Christ Jesus; preferring their honor to his honor, and their interest to his interest; and, therefore, they are guilty of idolatry, by setting themselves uppermost in their estimation, affections, designs, and pursuits. And if I should grant that such as these may be useful in the ministry, yet surely the undertaking will be awfully hazardous to the souls committed to their charge, and the consequence extremely dreadful to themselves, for, "when they have preached to others, themselves will be finally rejected and cast away."

2dly, If the business of Gospel ministers is to preach Christ, hence see the honor and dignity of their office. No other than a glorious Christ, the anointed of God, the darling of heaven, and the beloved of angels and

saints, is the subject of their ministry; from him their authority and commission is derived, in his valuable interest they are engaged to speak, as "ambassadors in his name and stead." Their office is, therefore, honorable in some proportion to the dignity of the sovereign from whom they receive commission; the grandeur of the court in whose interest they are employed as ambassadors, and the important errand they have to transact with guilty men. And as they are engaged for Christ, and employed by him to act as ambassadors in his name, he has declared that he will regard the treatment they meet with as if done to himself: "He that receiveth you, says he, receiveth me; and he that despiseth you, despiseth me, and Him that sent me." Were we acting a part for ourselves, and speaking in our own name, and driving on our own self-interests, men might treat us as they pleased; but if we act as ambassadors for Christ, in pursuit of his interest, and in his name and stead, let them take heed how they despise the sacred character we sustain, or neglect the solemn messages we bring. But I must not dwell on these inferences, the time being far elapsed.

Permit me, therefore, now, with all humility, to address myself particularly to the venerable members of this Synod, with all others of the sacred character here present.

My reverend fathers and dear brethren:

The subject I have now been handling will necessarily lead me to great freedom and plainness of speech, yet I will not entertain so dishonorable a thought of any of you, as to imagine an apology necessary: nor will I doubt your candid acceptance of what shall now be said, though by one of the meanest of the sacred character, who would gladly sit at your feet and learn, and who is willing to stand corrected or reproofed by you.

Let what we have heard,

1. Lead us into our own hearts, to examine in the presence of an all-seeing God, whether we have not too much of this abominable selfish principle still lurking within us, and too little singleness of heart for God and Jesus Christ. Do we never shrink into diffidence and neglect in cases of duty, through the power and preva-

lence of that soothing temptation, Spare thyself? Do we never find this detestable enemy strive to encroach on the rights of the Godhead, and assume the honor and regard that is due to Jesus alone? Does it never creep into our studies, and seek to have a hand in our preparations for the sanctuary of the Lord, and dispose us to consult how to please, rather than how to profit; and how our own interest may be secured in the esteem and affections of our hearers, rather than how the interest and kingdom of Christ may be advanced? And when we enter the sacred desk, with a message from heaven to guilty men, are we never too thoughtful of the notices and observations of our poor fellow mortals round about us, and too little sensible of the all-seeing eye of Jehovah upon us, and the vast and inexpressible weight of the errand on which we come? Are we never too solicitous about mere external appearances that attend our delivery, and too little so about the spiritual frame of our hearts in the sight of God? Are we never tempted by this pernicious principle to play the hypocrite before our hearers, with a greater show of zeal, and fervor, and devotion than is answerable to the inward state and frame of our minds? If at any time we find ourselves dead and barren, and have but little clearness or freedom, we are dejected; our hearts are depressed and sunk within us: but from whence is this dejection? Is it because we have done so poorly for God, and been so miserably deficient in his service? Or only because we have made so indifferent a figure in the eyes of our fellow men? On the other hand, when we find some enlargement and freedom, a readiness of thought, and fluency of expression, and feel some suitable degree of zeal and fervor, does a selfish, deceitful heart never prompt us to a sort of self-complacency, and delight in ourselves? And if we are pleased that God has enabled us, in any measure, to be faithful, yet, are we never too much elated with the approbation and applause of those that have heard us?

And when our public performances are ended, what is the object of our greatest solicitude? Whether sinners are awakened and won to Christ, or whether we our-

selves are held in high esteem? Whether the word preached has gained their hearts for God, or whether it has gained for us their pleasing approbation? And does this selfish principle never direct or influence our conduct among the people of our charge? Are we not often best pleased with the company and society of those who (perhaps too partial in our favor) may gratify our vanity with their professions and tokens of esteem and friendship? And do we not, from the same principle, shun, or too much neglect, those who appear less friendly, though they need our instruction and advice as much as others? Do we not too much neglect the duties of private and particular applications, for fear of offending; and yet frame excuses for our neglects, that have too much selfishness in them? In a word, what did we undertake the ministry for? What do we study, preach, and pray, live, and labor for? It is ultimately for God or for ourselves? I beseech you, reverend and dear sirs, bear with this plainness and freedom, and let me not be looked upon in the light of an arrogant accuser; far be it from me to lay any of these things to your charge, or to harbor a doubt of your disinterested zeal for God, and victory over self. "There is but one heart among us that I have reason to suspect," and over that I find it necessary to keep a continual watch and guard; and oh! how many are the secret windings and turnings, and different shapes and appearances of this pernicious adversary, self! How often does it beset us, when and where we have little expected it, and give us occasion to lament and say, "Hast thou found me, O mine enemy?" If we find then, on the above-mentioned inquiry, that our self-denial and deadness to ourselves is yet very imperfect. Let us in the

Second place, Bitterly bewail it before God, with the deepest humiliation. For what can be more detestable, or carry a greater malignity in its very nature, than that disposition that would exalt self in the place of God and Jesus Christ, and as it were contend with him for the preference, and dispute the point with him who shall be most loved and regarded by us, he or we; and whose honor and interest shall be primarily pursued, his or our own? And how inconsistent is this selfishness with that

lesson of self-denial that we are obliged to preach to others, and which Jesus has taught us, both by precept and example. Nay, with what force can we recommend self-denial to others, while we are selfish, or how can we reprove or condemn the sin in others that we harbor too much in ourselves. We tell the drunkard, the swearer, the profane sinner, that "except he be converted and changed he can not be saved; and is it not as true of us, that we can not be the true disciples, or faithful ministers of Christ, except we deny ourselves." Does not our Lord himself lay this down as the grand criterion by which he submits his own doctrine and mission to trial, whether it was of God or whether he spake of himself. "He that speaketh of himself," says he, "seeketh his own glory: but he that seeketh the glory of him that sent him, the same is true." I make no doubt, sirs, but selfishness in its reigning dominion, is a greater sin than drunkenness or whoredom. The one dishonors God by breaking his law; but the other strikes at the very relation of sovereign and subject, and contends with him, as it were, for the rights of Godhead, and insists on being above him in the estimation, affections, intentions, and pursuits. Now, "it is one thing to break some particular laws of a prince, and another to set up to be above him, or to exalt a rival in his room and stead;" the first indeed is transgression, but the other is downright treason and rebellion, and therefore the most heinous. And indeed whatever we do in religion, and how good soever it be, as to the matter or thing done, yet if self is the reigning principle, it tarnishes, corrupts, and debases all. And as it is the very essence of holiness to live to God, and act entirely for him, so it is horrible wickedness, in the very nature of it, to live to ourselves, and act ultimately for ourselves. If, therefore, we find the remains, or secret workings of so corrupt and detestable a principle, let us mourn and be humbled before God, and repair by faith to Him who once died, "That they which live should not live to themselves, but to Him who died for them, and rose again." Let us, in the third place,

Ever be watchful against this enemy of God and our souls, and endeavor to suppress the first risings of it.

Let us ever remember, "we are not our own," and therefore have no business to live to ourselves, or regard our interest or reputation, any further than the honor of Christ, and the interest of religion is concerned. If God has made us, if Christ has redeemed us, if in our ordination vows we have solemnly given up ourselves and our all to him, then certainly we are not our own; and therefore to appropriate our time and talents to our own interests and reputation is a sacrilegious robbing of God.

Further, let us guard against that fear of man that selfishness would prompt us to, and which would make us too fond to please, and too fearful to displease; for if we thus seek to please man, and by that means to advance ourselves, we can not be the faithful "servants of Jesus Christ." And yet, such are the perverse tempers of many we have to deal with, that we are often reduced to an unhappy dilemma, and must either offend God or offend them. Poor guilty mortals love to be soothed and flattered, but do not love to be plainly dealt with; hence, such pointed addresses as tend to discover them to themselves often excite their resentment. Thus, when our Lord was representing to his hearers, by several parables, the awful destruction that would shortly come upon the final rejectors of the Gospel Saviour, and the Gospel salvation, it is said: "the chief priests and Pharisees perceived that he spake of them." A heinous business indeed! as if it was intolerable insolence for him to speak of them. It is true, they perceived right, he did speak of them, and all others like them; and what then? Why, they are exasperated, and would have laid hands on him, and treated him in a manner they thought he deserved, had it not been that they feared the multitude. And when this is the case, that we must either offend God or men; whose displeasure shall we most regard? If carnal self is consulted, it will influence us to displease God, and to sooth and flatter our fellow-men. But alas! should we make such an awful sacrifice to their corrupt humors, will they undertake to answer it for us? Will they defend us from the displeasure of Jehovah, when he shall send for us by death, or sentence us to hell by his righteous judgment? No, they dare not attempt this,



nor dare we trust them in this matter. We have one God, and one Master to please, and he must be obeyed, whether men like or dislike. Our errand to them is on matter of life and death, the vast importance of which must engage all the powers of our souls. Poor Christless sinners are not in a state to be soothed and flattered, or jested and trifled with; heaven and hell are not matters to be talked of in a careless indolent strain; it is plain dealing such want, however they may take it; such as will tend to make them feel their wretched, miserable state, and awaken their solicitude for deliverance.

Again, our business is to preach Christ Jesus the Lord, and exhibit him to view in his personal glory and divine fulness as the law-fulfiller and Saviour of sinners; to urge them compassionately to come to him that they might have life, and on their final refusal, to denounce against them the terrors of eternal death. And besides the inexpressible importance of these things, every consideration from the present providences of God suggests an awakening call to the utmost diligence and painful industry. The God of heaven is now thundering an alarm on every side, our country is groaning under ravages and devastations, and all the frightful calamities of war and blood! The enemies of Zion are forming a confederacy, and saying: "Let us raze it, let us raze it to the foundation." And who can tell how soon our churches may be demolished and beaten into rubbish, and we ourselves called to prison and to death? And what, in the name of God, shall we do in a day of suffering, if we have not learned to deny ourselves, and account our honor, interest, and even life itself, nothing in comparison of the interest and kingdom of Jesus Christ? Or should God in mercy yet spare his Church from the ravages of Popish and Pagan adversaries, yet as to us, we know our time is short, and "the night of death will soon come when no man can work." We live in a dying world, and dwell in regions of mortality, and have lately had frequent and awful notices of the uncertain tenure of human life.

The last year in particular, with respect to ministers may very properly be called the dying year, in which the God of heaven has smitten his Church in these parts,

with repeated strokes of sore bereavement in a close and awful succession! Scarce had we time to dry our weeping eyes for the loss of one of eminent character and usefulness,\* but the streams of grief were called to flow down afresh for the loss of another,† whose zeal for God and the conversion of souls, was scarce to be paralleled. And yet for all this, the anger of Jehovah was not turned away, but his hand was soon lifted up again, and with a dreadful aim, and resistless stroke, has brought down to the dust, perhaps the greatest pillar in this part of Zion's buildings.‡ Oh! how does the whole fabric shake and totter! And what a gloomy aspect do these providences wear? as if God, by calling home his ambassadors, was about to quit the affair of negotiating peace with mankind any more.

Shall not we, then, who survive, double and redouble our diligence, knowing our time is short, and in proportion to the decrease of laborers, the work increases upon our hands. O sirs! are heaven and hell glorious and dreadful realities? are sinners despising the one and sleeping over the mouth of the other, and are we sent from God to awaken them, and show them their danger? sent to offer them a Saviour and invite them to fly from the wrath to come to his atoning blood, why then, oh! why do not these important realities swallow up our whole attention? Why do not we make more haste in plucking sinners as brands from everlasting burning? Why do not we pray more fervently, and preach more zealously, and lay out our whole life, and soul, and strength in this great work? What! is the interest and happiness of deathless immortal souls worth no more pains? Can we do no more for the honor and interest of our glorious Master than this comes to? Shall the men of this world be more painful and industrious in seeking themselves, than we in seeking the glory of Christ, and the salvation of souls? God forbid! We are on

\* The Rev. Mr. Aaron Burr, President of the College.

† The Rev. Mr. James Davenport, Minister at Hopewell, both of New-Jersey.

‡ The Rev. Jonathan Edwards, President of the College of New-Jersey.

matters of life and death. We pray, and preach, and labor for eternity. Sure it becomes us then to do it with all our might. Shall we not be solemn and serious, when so near that state and place where all are serious? Believe it, sirs, there is no trifling in the eternal world; there are none in jest, either in heaven or hell. God forbid, then, that we should jest and trifle with immortal souls, that are just at the door and upon the borders of an eternal state!

# ON PREACHING CHRIST.

BY THE REV. JOHN JENNINGS.

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PROFESSING ourselves Christians, I hope, we are satisfied upon careful and rational inquiry, that the religion of Jesus comes from God; and that it is a most glorious dispensation, no less for the sublime wonders of its doctrine, than the divine purity of its precepts. Now in all the peculiar glories of this religion, *Christ* is interwoven like Phidias' name in the shield, which could not be effaced without destroying the shield itself; so that preaching Christ and preaching the Gospel are, in Scripture style, synonymous terms.

I. To *preach Christ*, therefore, is our charge, our business, and our glory. But, "who is sufficient for these things?" Give me leave, then, my dear brethren and friends, to remind myself and you, what regard a minister should have to our Redeemer in his preaching.

1. Let us make Christ the end of our preaching. If we seek principally to please men, then are we not the servants of Christ. If we look no farther than our own reputation, or temporal advantage, appropriating our talents to our own private use, how shall we make up our accounts to our divine Master?

Our *ultimate* end should be the personal glory of Christ. That the glory of Christ, as God, is the ultimate end of the Gospel, none can doubt; so that it is said of this divine

Person : "All things are for him, as well as by him." Is he not worth ten thousand of us? Of more worth than the world; the only begotten Son of God, whom the highest angels adore? Now if the glory of Christ's person be the principal end in the divine schemes and actings, it should also be our highest view and design.

Again, as the glory of Christ's *person* should be our ultimate end, so the advancement of his kingdom of grace among men should be our subordinate end. The immediate design of the Gospel is the recovery of fallen creatures to holiness and happiness. Christ is "come into the world to save sinners;" and he sends us to preach his gospel, in order "that men might live soberly, righteously, and godly, looking for the blessed hope." We should not think it enough to inform, to amuse, to please, to affect, but we must aim farther to bring them to trust in Christ, to be penitent and holy; and every subject must be managed with this view. And let it be our great care, on a speculative subject, still to keep the end in view, and apply it practically.

Let us by all means endeavor to save precious souls, but yet aim at a higher end, that we ourselves may be "a sweet savor of Christ unto God;" and then, though we miss of our secondary end, and are not as we could wish, "the savor of life unto life" to any great number, yet in being "the savor of death unto death to them that perish," we shall be the instruments of glorifying the justice and long-suffering of Christ, and be witnesses for God, "that there has been a prophet amongst them." Our primary end is answered, "our labor is with the Lord," and we in the mean time are supported, "though Israel be not gathered," for "the word shall not return empty."

Nay, further, it is not enough that the strain of our preaching be adapted to the true design of the Gospel, but we must at heart sincerely intend it; otherwise, though our discourses be unexceptionable, and others be saved through our ministry, yet if our designs be wrong and base, we "shall be castaways."

2. Let Christ be the *matter* of our preaching. Let us display the divine dignity and loveliness of his person, as

“God manifest in the flesh,” unfold his mediatorial office, the occasion, the design, and purport of his great undertaking—remind our hearers of the particulars of his incarnation, life death, resurrection, ascension, and intercession—set forth the characters he bears, as a prophet, priest, and king; as a shepherd, captain, advocate, and judge. Let us demonstrate the sufficiency of his satisfaction, the tenor and excellence of the covenant confirmed with and by him, our justification by his righteousness, adoption through our relation to him, sanctification by his Spirit, our union with him as our head, and safe conduct by his providence; and how pardon, grace, and glory accrue to the elect through his suretyship and sacrifice, and are dispensed by his hand. Let us declare and explain his most holy laws in his name, and teach the people whatever duties he has commanded to God, our neighbor and ourselves; quicken the saints to duty, raise their hopes, establish and comfort their souls, by the exceeding great and precious promises of the Gospel, which in him “are yea and amen.” I give but short and imperfect hints of these things, and refer to the apostolical writings, which are made up of discourses on these and such like topics.

3. Let a continual regard to Christ distinguish our sermons on any subject from discourses on mere natural religion. If we speak of the perfections of God, let us consider them as shining in his Son, “who is the brightness of his Father’s glory, and express image of his person,” and exemplified in his undertaking. If we set forth Gospel blessings and promises, let us consider them as purchased by a Saviour’s blood, and distributed by his bounty; for “by his own blood he has obtained eternal redemption, and from him the whole body is supplied.” If we take notice of the providence of God, let us not forget that “all power is given to Christ, in heaven and in earth,” and that “he is head over all things to the Church.” If by the terrors of the last judgment we persuade men, let “the wrath of the Lamb” be denounced, while the reckoning is represented as most dreadful for abused grace and a slighted Saviour; for “this is the condemnation.” And when we are assisting the devo-

tions of the people, the same regard to Christ should be observed.

When we are discoursing on the subject of duty, Christ, as the most powerful motive, is by no means to be forgotten; for to persuade men to practical godliness is one of the most difficult parts of a minister's work. Men will hear a speculative discourse with a curious satisfaction, and attend to the displays of God's grace with some joy; nay, a Felix may tremble when judgment is preached. Many, indeed, will bear to hear of duty too; but to induce them to practice it, *hic labor, hoc opus*. Here we have need to call in all helps, and take all advantages, which the Gospel, as well as the light of nature, can furnish. In other discourses we are rather attacking Satan's outworks, a blind and prejudiced understanding; but, in practical subjects, we assault his strongest fort, corrupted will. We may gain the understanding on our side, with some share of the affections; but to subdue a perverse will, in favor of practical Christianity, is not so easy a thing, that we can afford to spare any important motive or quickening consideration.\* But here I must be more particular in explaining how we should regard Christ in preaching duty.

(1.) We should represent *duty* as the fruit of faith in

\* In reference to what is advised in this and the following sections, a young preacher will do well to read, with devotion and care, those parts of Mr. Matthew Henry's practical and incomparable Exposition, which relate to the subject he would preach upon. He will also find in the works of Mr. Arthur Hildersham, his Exposition of Psalm 1 and John 4, an uncommon degree of sacred skill, in recommending duty and practice from Christian motives, worthy of assiduous imitation.

Perhaps this may be the most proper place to recommend a work lately published, namely. *A Practical View of the Prevailing Religious System of Professed Christians, in the Higher and Middle Classes in this Country, contrasted with real Christianity*, by W. Wilberforce, Esq.—a work which, for excellency of plan, a strain of masculine eloquence, acuteness of discernment, and force of reasoning, and above all, a spirit of sublime devotion, is not perhaps equalled in our language; nor is it a small part of its excellence that it represents duty, according to our author's advice, as the fruit of faith and love, enforcing obedience with motives respecting Christ, to be performed by his grace, and acceptable through his merits.—*Dr. Williams.*

Christ, and love to him. When by faith we behold a crucified Jesus, do we not tremble at the severity of God's justice, and hate those sins that occasioned his sorrows? When we consider that "by his stripes we are healed," can we forbear to love Him who first loved us? Shall we not live to him that died for us? Can we have the heart to crucify him afresh?

From such actings of faith and outgoings of love, flows that divine temper which constitutes the new creature, and lays the foundation of all right Gospel obedience. Thus, therefore, let us continually trace Gospel duties up to their fountain-head, that the people may learn, that it is not outward reformation which will stand the test in the day of judgment, but an inward renewal of the soul; that "the tree must first be made good, before there can be any good fruit;" and that all must be done for Christ's sake, and flow from "faith working by love."

(2.) Let us enforce duties with motives respecting Christ. As grateful love to him should constrain us, fear of his wrath should awe us, if we would approve ourselves the disciples and followers of Christ, and enjoy communion with him; if we would promote his honor and interest, and possess joy and not confusion, at his appearing. Not that we should neglect any motives which the light of nature can furnish, and are level to the capacities of the people; for we have need enough of all; but if we go no further, our exhortations will want far the greatest part of their weight. We must "beseech and exhort by the Lord Jesus."

(3.) Let us inculcate duties, as to be performed by the grace of Christ; telling the people that our fruitfulness depends on our being ingrafted into this vine; that there is no holy walk without being "led by the Spirit, and when we do good, it is not we, but the grace of God that is in us; that out of a sense of weakness we are to be made strong, through Christ strengthening us."

(4.) Let us consider all good works as acceptable through the merits of Christ; and remind our hearers, that could we do all, we were but "unprofitable servants;" and that we must seek to be found at last, not having our own righteousness, but that which is of God by faith.



4. Let us express ourselves in a style becoming the gospel of Christ ; not with great swelling words of vanity, or in the style of the heathen sophists, or words that man's wisdom teacheth, and perhaps sound best in our own ears ; but let us use "great plainness of speech," and seek to find out such "acceptable words" as may best reach the understanding and affections of the bulk of an auditory.

As for the affectionate part of a discourse, brethren, I suppose you allow, upon a view of ancient and modern learning, that the men of the east, and next to them the ancient Greeks, excelled in fire, and works of imagination ; and yet the moderns, inhabiting milder western climates, even the French, from whom, on many accounts, we should expect the most of this sort, produce but an empty flash, in comparison with the solid heat of the ancients ; and rather amuse us with little delicacies, than, by masterly strokes, command our whole souls. Now the Scriptures are the noblest remains of what the east has produced, and much surpass the best of the Greeks in the force of their oratory. Let us, therefore, take their spirit and style, and thence borrow bold figures and allusions, strong descriptions, and commanding address to the passions ; but I am prevented in all I would say on this important head, by the Archbishop of Cambray's *Dialogues concerning Eloquence*, which I am as little capable of improving upon, as I am of commending them as they deserve.\*

\* The sublime Fenelon's *Dialogues on Eloquence* are deservedly mentioned, by many writers of eminence, with a sort of respect bordering on veneration ; and no wonder, for such a union of the sublime and simple, of learning and familiarity, of judicious criticism and happy illustration ; and unaffected humility and warm benevolence, delicate taste and solid sense ; and above all, such reverence for sacred things, blended with a subject so often employed by human vanity and pride, are superior excellencies very rarely found.

Dr. Doddridge (Fam. Expos. on John 14 : 2. Improvem. Note) having alluded to a beautiful observation of this author, says : "This is the remark of the pious Archbishop of Cambray, in his incomparable *Dialogues on Eloquence* ; which, may God put it into the hearts of our preachers often and attentively to read !" Another able judge on this subject thus expresses himself : "But what need I enter further into the detail of pulpit eloquence ? If you want to see the

II. And now, brethren, let me lay before you some reasons and motives, to back this friendly admonition concerning preaching Christ.

1. It is the only way to have our labors accepted of Christ, and to have communion with him in our work. Even *Paul* cries out: "Who is sufficient for these things?" With how much more reason may we do so? Does not our cheerful progress in our work depend on a divine *afflatus*, and the spirit dispensed by Christ? but if we take little notice of him in our preaching, and do not distinguish ourselves from the moral philosophers of the Gentiles, how can we expect any more of this enlivening and encouraging presence of Christ than they had? Nay, we have less ground to expect it, if we slight willfully so noble a revelation, with which they were never favored.

2. It is the only way to win souls to Christ, and to make them lively Christians. The success of the Gospel is owing, certainly, no less to the power of its motives, than to the clearness, fullness, and purity of its precepts. These peculiar motives of the Gospel have all such a respect to Christ, that they are enervated if HE be disregarded. The Gospel is what God in his unfathomable wisdom has fixed upon, as the grand mean to reform mankind, and save them; and he seems in honor concerned to crown it with greater success than any other scheme whatsoever. "The preaching of Christ crucified is the power of God." If, by suppressing a part, we maim the Gospel, we can expect in the nature of things, but a very defective success. Nay, may we not fear that God's honor is concerned, in such a case, to blast us while we labor almost in vain?

Observation agrees with this theory. The great masters of reason, who have less regard to Christ in their

whole machinery and apparatus of it displayed in the completest manner, I refer you to the great and good Prelate of Cambray's Dialogues on that subject; who was himself the justest critic, and one of the best models of eloquence that I know." *Fordyce's Theodorus*, p. 150. Lond. 1755. For a brief but striking character of the eloquence of Fenelon, see the *Abbe Maury's Principles of Eloquence*, sect. 55.—*Dr. Williams*.

preaching, may indeed, have a charm for one of an hundred, who have a taste for the beauties of fine reasoning, and be of use to them, while the bulk of an auditory is asleep. Alas! with what heart can we go on, entertaining two or three, while starving most of the souls in an auditory? May we not also observe a happier effect of a strain prudently evangelical on Christians themselves: that they who sit under it are more lively, zealous, ready to every good work, and heavenly-minded, than those Christians who have heard less of the Gospel?

3. It is a direct imitation of the Apostles of Christ. Christ himself, whilst upon earth, preached the Gospel in parables, in a concealed manner, distantly, and with reserve. He could not so fully take the advantage of his resurrection, satisfaction, ascension, and the like, not yet done, made, or proved. He had many things to say, which his disciples could not then bear; but he declares them afterward by his spirit in his Apostles. They therefore are the true pattern of our preaching *now*, after the mystery of redemption is brought to light, and hath its full evidence.

How then did the Apostles preach Christ? It is endless to attempt a full detail of particulars; any part of the apostolical writings is authority sufficient to our purpose; and therefore I have been sparing in quotations all along, as needless to those who will look into these writings with this view; and here we do not desire to insist upon any passages in their writings which may be supposed to be written for reasons peculiar to that age and country in which the Apostles wrote, and in which perhaps we are not so much obliged to imitate them in our preaching; for what will remain, after all these are put out of the account, will, I am satisfied, be as full to our purpose as those that are struck off.

I shall then, by way of specimen, select some of the Apostles' discourses on moral duties, where we are most apt to forget Christ, or a due respect to him; that it may at once appear that the Apostles neither shunned the pressing of such duties, nor disregarded Christ in treating of them.

*Honesty* is pressed by these motives: "The unright-

eous, thieves and extortioners shall not inherit the kingdom of God," (which in the style of the New Testament, is Christ's kingdom of grace and glory.) That Christians are "converted by the Spirit of Christ, and justified by his righteousness." *Chastity* is enjoined, as "our bodies are members of Christ, as we are one spirit with him, temples of the Holy Ghost, and bought with a price." *Alms-giving* is recommended, as it brings a large tribute of "praise to God for our subjection to the gospel of Christ—and Christ became poor for our sakes." *Evil-speaking* is forbidden, because "we were foolish and wicked; but the grace of God has made the difference; not for our righteousness, but of his free mercy he has regenerated us, and given us his Holy Spirit, through Jesus Christ, by whom we are justified and heirs of glory." Subjects are commanded to obey magistrates, because "the Gospel is come, and we should put on Christ Jesus." Husbands are charged "to love their wives, as Christ loved the Church." The obedience of wives is urged, because "the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ is the head of the Church." Servants are exhorted to their duty, as they would "adorn the doctrine of Christ, because grace so teacheth, and that we look for Christ's appearance, who gave himself for us that we might be holy." Now what is there in these motives peculiar to one age or nation? Are not all these as good now as formerly? And are men so ready in their duty, that we have no need of them?

Nay, it is worthy of observation, that the Apostles do not confine themselves to motives peculiarly adapted to the duty they are pressing, and which serve to enforce one duty rather than another; but, as you may see, when such proper motives are not at hand, they take, without any scruple, common or general ones, which will equally enforce any duty whatsoever.

And why should not we introduce the peculiarities of the Gospel on all occasions, as frequently as the Apostles did? If our schemes of theology will not allow us, we have reason to suspect we are in a different scheme from the Apostles. Are we afraid that men will make perverse use of such doctrines as the Apostles used for mo-

tives? The Apostles chose to venture it, and why should not we? If we will not dare to preach such a Gospel as may be perverted by men of corrupt minds to their own injury, we must not expect to be instruments of any good. If we are a "savor of life" to some, we must expect to be the "savor of death" to others, or not preach at all.

I confess, even the *Remonstrant* scheme (which, I think, considerably sinks the doctrines of grace) does allow room to regard Christ abundantly more than most preachers of that denomination do. I would meet them on their own principles; what hinders their frequently inculcating the merits of Christ, the depravity of our nature, the necessity of regeneration, the aids of grace, union, and communion with Christ? These topics, it were to be hoped, might have their effect: but alas! how few of the *Remonstrants* improve to advantage, so much of the Gospel as they hold and receive; and it makes me less inclined to this scheme, that it so generally draws those that embrace it into a strain of preaching, even on practical subjects, so different from that of the Apostles; and inclines them, I know not how, to suppress those glorious motives (which yet their own principles might allow) by which the Apostles enforced Gospel duties.

4. So only shall we deserve the name of Christian preachers. *Only* did I say; I am afraid this may sound too harsh. Come let us put the matter as soft and candid as common-sense will allow us. So shall we most evidently or best deserve this honorable title.

Whilst a preacher keeps off from the peculiarities of the Gospel, and says nothing but what the light of nature would also suggest and authorize, give me leave to say, a stranger might possibly doubt whether he is a Deist or a Christian; the question is like an imperfect mathematical problem, which equally admits of different solutions.

Suppose the ghosts of Paul and Seneca to come, mere strangers, into an assembly, where one is haranguing the people in this abstracted manner, I am apt to think Seneca would claim him as a philosopher of his own sect and religion. Now if Paul should also make his claim

to him as a minister of Christ, how could the question be decided, without allowing Seneca to be a preacher of Christ also?

On the other hand, if a preacher insists upon even the peculiar and glorious truths of Christianity, but so unhappily manages them, as not to lead people to holiness, and the imitation of Christ thereby—what is this to the grand and full purpose of preaching; or to the ultimate design of the Gospel? Such preachers are quite off that divine system which is calculated to destroy the works of the devil, and to teach men sobriety, righteousness, and godliness. It is not only Christ *without us* we are to preach, but also Christ *in us*, and our putting on Christ Jesus, by a holy heart and life.

If the Apostle James should come again, and make a visitation to our churches, and hear such a preacher, he would imagine himself among such people as he writes against in his epistle; he would be apt, when the minister had done, in his zeal for Christ, to take the text in hand again, and supply what the preacher had omitted, namely, the application: and to say to the auditors: “Know ye not that faith without works is dead?” If the preacher should here interrupt him, saying, “Hold, spare your pains, the Spirit of God will make the application, and teach men holiness,” would not James reply: “I and the rest of the Apostles were taught to preach otherwise, and to give particular exhortations to duty: we judged we might as well leave it to the Spirit, without our pains, to reveal the doctrine, as to instruct men in the practice of the Gospel.”

Upon the whole, brethren, let it be our resolution to study and preach Christ Jesus. On this subject there is room for the strictest reasoning, and most sublime philosophy; it deserves, invites, and inspires the strongest fire of the orator; in extolling Christ, we can not shock the most delicate taste by over-strained hyperboles: here the climax may rise till it is out sight; our imagery can not be too strong and rich.

Should our Lord himself appear, and give you a charge at your entrance on the ministry, would he not say, (what indeed he has said already :) “As the Father hath sent me,

so send I you to preach the kingdom of God, that every knee may bow to me, and every tongue confess me. Teach them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and tell them, that without me they can do nothing; that when they have done all, they are unprofitable servants, and must be found in my righteousness. Become all things to all men; seek words which the Holy Ghost teacheth, that you may gain souls, and bring in my sheep, for whom I have laid down my life. If ye love me, feed my sheep. I have called you friends; do all in my name, and to my honor: so I will be with you always; and if you thus watch for souls, you shall give up your account with joy, at my appearing. This is the preaching which, though it seems foolish to many, shall prove the power of God, and the wisdom of God. Cast forth the net on this side, and so may you expect to catch many souls. Be ye followers of my Apostles, as they are of me, and in my name shall ye do wonders; if you preach me, I and mine shall therein rejoice; be not ashamed of my gospel, and I will not be ashamed of you."

But to arrive at any tolerable perfection in preaching Christ is a work of time, the result of a careful perusal of the Scriptures, and studying the hearts of men. It requires the mortifying of the pride of carnal reason, a great concern for souls, and a humble dependence on the Spirit of God, with the lively exercise of devotion in our closets.

As for the reasoning part on the more agreed points of our religion, a young preacher sooner may get to considerable excellency; but the Christian orator is longer in finishing. We may soon get necessary truths into our own minds, and come at minds of our size and taste; but by proper motives and ways to reach the souls of a different make and turn, even the lowest of the vulgar, is what very few quickly arrive at; but let us not despair: if we thus regard the Lord Jesus in our ministrations, we may very reasonably expect the assistance of his Spirit—and then we shall be "able to do all things, through Christ strengthening us."

# OF PARTICULAR AND EXPERIMENTAL PREACHING.

BY THE REV. JOHN JENNINGS.

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RIGHTLY to divide the word of truth is the necessary care of a minister, if he would be "approved of God, and be a workman that needeth not to be ashamed." And it is a skill worth studying for, and laboring to attain: our success and the good of souls depend upon it more than is commonly imagined.

No doubt you may have heard many honest people express their dissatisfaction with some preachers in such terms as these: "They go on constantly in a *general way*, that does not come close to the heart, reaches not my case and experience, and I am not edified by them." Their complaint is not altogether without meaning or reason, as I hope you will be convinced by and by.

1. To keep a little in view that passage of Scripture I have mentioned, *dividing the word* may mean these four things: 1. Going through the variety of Gospel subjects; declaring the whole counsel of God, the doctrines of grace, threatenings, promises, and the duties of morality; and giving each its due proportion.

Some, finding their thoughts flow most readily and affectionately on the doctrines of grace, and that by these they best command the affections of the hearers, are altogether upon them, and neglect to teach the people to observe what Christ



has commanded them. I bear many of them witness they have a zeal for God, but I wish it were more according to knowledge. They do not sufficiently consider that holiness is the very design of Christianity; and our preaching on other heads is in order the better to enforce duty, and render men like to Christ.

I am afraid, from what I have observed, that this strain of preaching will increase the number of those hearers whom our Saviour describes by the "stony ground," in the parable of the sower; namely, such who, though full of notions and transient affections, and forward in professing, yet have an unsubdued will, have no root in themselves, and bring forth no fruit to God. This strain, I fear, though it may seem to bring many toward Christ, will bring but few safely to him. Many of their hearers, with Christ much in their mouths, will prove but hypocrites settled on their lees, and slaves to lusts. Nor is this strain more happy for the uniform growth of the sincere Christian. They that sit under it are too frequently low, imperfect, and partial in practical goodness; distempered with conceit and preposterous zeal for words and phrases, and things of little or no consequence; perplexed and perplexing others with a thousand groundless scruples; children in understanding, and it were happy were they so in malice too; but alas! their narrowness of mind infects the heart with uncharitable affections.

Others, having not arrived at the relish of the doctrines of grace themselves, suppress them in their preaching, and are altogether on morality; enforcing it with no motives of the Gospel, except some of those addressed to fear. These, if they are masters of much fire, may be convincing to some; but it fares with most of their converts as with the man in the parable, out of whom the unclean spirit went for a while, who, finding his house empty, returned with seven more; and the latter end of such is worse than the beginning. Or else, the awakened hearer either takes up a proud dependence upon a mistaken, external, and pharisaical righteousness; or, not being by his teacher led to Christ, he proceeds not, settles not; but abiding long under the doubtful concern, is wearied with it, weary of it, and comes to nothing; which seems to be the thought in Hosea: "Ephraim is an unwise son; he should not stay long in the place of the breaking forth of children." Or lastly, if any are truly converted under such ministry, it is very usual that they are forced to desert it, to find richer and sweeter pasture for their souls.

Some of their hearers may possibly prefer this strain of preaching; but it does not thence follow that they are the better for it. To illustrate this remark, I will recite a paragraph out of *Remarkable Passages in the Life of a Private Gentleman*: "Spiritual searching discourses I did not so much savor as mere moral doctrines, though too immoral myself. The hopes I had conceived of the strength of my good resolutions rendered them grateful. *Seneca's Morals* I read with pleasure; *Mr. Baxter's Saint's Rest* frightened me; so after reading a few passages, I threw it by." Thus with regret he tells us what little profit he had in that way, of his fondness for which he was ashamed, when he came to be of Paul's mind, to count all dross and dung, that he might win Christ.

2. The putting of a thought in several distinct views and lights, for different purposes and designs. The sacred writers are herein our pattern, and that not by chance, but for wise reasons. One view is designed to raise one affection; another view, to excite another of a different sort, and, finally, one of the views is designed as an antidote against the poison which the corruption of men's hearts might draw out of the other.

For instance, the terms and way of our justification and salvation are frequently stated thus: "That we must be found in Christ, having on the righteousness which is of God by faith," and "we must be made the righteousness of God in Him." And this view is exquisitely adapted to humble us, to draw forth love and gratitude, and encourage our hopes and dependence.

But lest this phraseology, if used alone, should beget security, at other times we are told, that "by works a man is justified, and not by faith only; and that faith without works is dead;" and that the inquiry at the last day shall be, Who has "fed the hungry, clothed the naked?" &c.

And most commonly these two views are united in the same paragraph; that one may prevent the ill consequences man's perverseness would draw from the other. As physicians, finding some dangerous effect likely to follow from a drug of sovereign virtue, mix some other with it to prevent the fatal consequences.

So we are said to be "elect, according to the fore-knowledge of God, through sanctification of the Spirit unto obedience, and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus." Again, we are told, that "by grace we are saved through faith, the gift of God, not

of works ; for we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works."

I may give another instance, in the different ways the Scripture speaks of power and duty. Sometimes we are told that "we can not come to Christ expect the Father draw us." That "without Christ we can do nothing." That "if we live, it is not we, but Christ that liveth in us." Now these views tend to hide pride from man, to create a diffidence of ourselves, and to centre our hopes and dependence on Christ ; but lest the slothful and wicked servant should make his impotence his excuse, we are called upon to "turn and make us new hearts," exhorted to "ask and we shall receive," and are assured "God will give the Spirit to them that ask him;" and how happily are these two views united in this passage ! "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling ; for it is God that worketh in you to will and to do."

Now, less skilful dividers of the Word deal entirely in one of these views, and neglect the other ; and while they are laboring to excite one good affection, they raise another of a bad tendency together with it. To this in part it is owing that there are so many low or distempered Christians. Nor is this partiality more happy in effecting the real conversion of sinners, who generally, under such management, are either left asleep, and settled in a fond conceit of their own righteousness, or else stumble at the rock of offense (in a different manner indeed from what the Jews did) thinking to find by Christ a way to Heaven, without holiness or moral honesty.

3. Distinctly explaining and enforcing particular duties, and opposing particular sins. It is true, the whole scheme of the Gospel duty is deducible from the general heads of faith and love ; but, alas ! most men's minds are slow, confused, and erroneous in long deductions ; and it is our business to lead them on in every step, and to show what particular duties to God, our neighbor, and ourselves, will flow from these principles, and are necessary to make the man of God perfect. We must particularly teach them to "add to their faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, and charity," if we would not leave them blind and untruthful ; and we should, in a particular manner, speak of "the fruits of the Spirit, as love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance;" and at proper seasons explain and enforce each of them. We should apply the lamp of

the Word to detect and disgrace all the particular "works of darkness," and to make manifest "the fruits of the flesh; such as adultery, lasciviousness, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like."

If I should read to a sick person a learned lecture on the benefit of health, and exhort him to take care to recover it, but never inquire into the nature of his disease, or prescribe proper methods and medicines for the cure, he would hardly acquiesce in me for his physician, or resign to me the care of his bodily health. Nor is it a more likely way to the soul's health to rest in mere general exhortations to holiness, without distinctly handling the several branches thereof, and the opposite sins.

4. Particularly applying to the several cases, tempers, and experiences of the hearers. Besides many thoughts suited in general to all cases, there might properly arise, in the application of most subjects, thoughts distinctly proper to the converted and unconverted; to notional hypocrites and mere moralists, to mourners, to backsliders, and lazy Christians; and at several times to a much greater variety of characters and persons. Now such particular addresses, when the case is drawn in a lively manner, and in the natural language of the sort of men intended, and judiciously and artfully treated, are the closest, most weighty, and most useful parts of the application.

That this is the true way of addressing an auditory, namely, to divide them into several classes, and distinctly speak to each, will be plain, if we look through the apostolic writings, and, I might add, the prophetic also, with this view; and we shall find that both prophets and apostles frequently take care to distinguish the holy and the vile, the converted and the unconverted. As for instance, as to their knowledge and apprehension of things: "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit, they are foolishness to him, he can not know them: but the spiritual judge all things." And also as to their obedience to the law, "The carnal mind is enmity against God, is not subject to God's law, nor can be subject, or please God."

They particularly reprove scoffers, and confute gain-sayers: "Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish." For instance, those who denied or cavilled at the resurrection: "Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened except it die," etc.

And also those that were for a faith without works; "Wilt thou know, vain man, that faith without works is dead?" etc.

They address carnal stupid sinners in an awful way; denounce "woe to them that are at ease;" as Paul when he made Felix tremble, or as Stephen, "Ye stiff-necked and uncircumcised," etc.

They lead convinced sinners to Christ; to those that are inquiring they say: "If ye will inquire, inquire ye, return, come; turn to the strong hold; if the Lord hath torn he will heal." "Repent and be baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus, for the remission of sins," etc. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ," etc.

They reason with the moralist, and those that "trust in themselves that they are righteous;" showing their righteousness is "as filthy rags." "The law saith, there is none righteous, but all the world are guilty before God; therefore by the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified; but the righteousness of God is manifested, that God might freely justify them that believe on Jesus, therefore man is justified by faith; boasting is excluded by the law of faith; and ye received the Spirit by the hearing of faith; the Gospel was before preached to Abraham; they that are of the works of the law are under the curse. But the law could not disannul the covenant confirmed before, but was a schoolmaster to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith; they then that are Christ's are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."

They sharply rebuke and expose pretending hypocrites, showing them their abominations, detecting and confounding the wretches that "delight to know God's way, and hear his word, but will not do it." As Peter: "Thou hast no part in this matter; thy heart is not right in the sight of God;" and James: "Show me thy faith without thy works; the devils believe and tremble."

They rouse and encourage Christians who have but little strength, and persuade them to make farther advances in religion—that he that is "feeble may be as David." "Ye are dull of hearing, for the time ye ought to have been teachers; strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age; therefore leaving the first principles, let us go on to perfection."

They deal with the several sorts of distempered Christians tenderly, and yet plainly and faithfully: as particularly, with those who idolize one minister, and despise others; telling them

it is not by might and power of man, but by God's Spirit, that the Gospel is successful. "While one saith, I am of Paul, and another, I am of Apollos, are ye not carnal? Who is Paul or Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed? It is God that giveth the increase; Paul, Apollos, Cephas, all are yours." They endeavor to soften those of too rigid a temper, exhorting them not to speak to the grief of those whom God hath smitten: as "Ye ought rather to forgive and comfort him; I beseech you confirm your love towards him." "If a man be over-taken in a fault, restore him in the spirit of meekness, considering lest thou also be tempted." They talk roundly to those who are apt to make God the author of sin; who say: "We unavoidably pine away in our iniquities, and how can we then be saved?" As in James, "Let no man say I am tempted of God; for God tempteth not any man."

Declining Christians are quickened, awakened, and put in mind of the love of their espousals; "Be watchful, and strengthened the things which remain, that are ready to die."

They awfully warn those who are in danger of sinning and falling back to perdition; telling them, "the righteousness they have done will be remembered no more:" and "God's soul will have no pleasure in them." "It is impossible for those who were once enlightened, etc., if they fall away, to renew them again to repentance, seeing they crucify the Son of God afresh."

They encourage the persecuted and afflicted; telling them: "When they pass through the fire and water, God will be with them," and that "when they are tried they shall come forth as gold, and be the Lord's in that day when he maketh up his jewels." "The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed." "We are compassed with a cloud of witnesses; Jesus endured the cross, and is set down at the right hand of the Majesty on high; whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and that for our profit; chastening yields the peaceable fruits of righteousness." And more particularly, those that lament relations dead in Christ, are told they shall go to be happy with them, though the dead shall not return: "Sorrow not as do others that have no hope; for those that sleep in Jesus will God bring with him."

There are also particular lessons for strong Christians, namely, to be tender to the weak, and to be public-spirited, that as

"Ephraim should not envy Judah, so neither should Judah vex Ephraim." "Him that is weak in the faith receive; let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not; let none put a stumbling-block in his brother's way; let not your good be ill spoken of; hast thou faith? have it to thyself; bear the infirmities of the weak; let every one please his neighbor for his good to edification. Knowledge puffeth up; but charity edifieth; let not your liberty be a stumbling-block to the weak—nor through thy knowledge let thy weak brother perish, for whom Christ died; if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world stands." Again, they are told that "a mark is set upon the men" that deplore the sins of the times; and "a book of remembrance is written" for those who distinguish themselves by their piety in times of abounding wickedness. "Thou hast a few names who have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white, for they are worthy."

You find also a suitable portion for those who are groaning under corruption; who complain they were "shapen in iniquity," and their actual "errors are past understanding;" although "I am carnal, sold under sin, and what I would I do not, and what I hate that do I; in my flesh dwells no good, and to perform good I find not, yea, with the flesh I serve the law of sin, (Oh! wretched man that I am!)" yet, "I consent to God's law, and delight in it after the inner man; it is not then I that do this evil, but sin that dwelleth in me. I thank God through Jesus Christ: with my mind I serve God's law, and God will deliver me from the body of this death." And they are told how God hath "laid on Christ our iniquities;" and he will be "the Lord our righteousness and strength." "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous."

The humble and penitent, who are of a contrite spirit, and tremble at God's word, are comforted: "Ye were sorry indeed, it was but for a season; it was after a godly manner; I rejoice in it; such sorrow worketh repentance not to be repented of; it wrought in you carefulness, fear, desire, zeal, and revenge; you have approved yourselves clear in this matter."

They who want direction, and cry out: "Oh! that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes!" are sent to God for counsel. "If any man lack wisdom, let him ask it of God, and it shall be given him."

The deceiver and the deceived (namely, those of evil minds,

who seduce others, and those that are misled in the simplicity of their hearts) are to be distinctly and differently treated; "On some have compassion, and others save with fear."

As for those of the house of Israel in desertion, who mourn after the Lord, who walk in darkness and see no light, and say, "the Lord hath forsaken me," there were, I believe, few, if any, in those days of the plentiful effusion of the Spirit, when the Gospel Church was in its infancy, and "a nation was to be born in a day;" but few, I say, who had doubts about their sincerity; they had persecutions, distress, and exercises of another sort; and those were sufficient. I am apt to think such cases were also rare in the beginning of the reformation from Popery; which seems to be the occasion of some of the first reformers confounding faith with assurance. However, there are laid up in the New-Testament, some proper hints of counsel for such as should in after times labor under the hidings of God's face; as "To examine themselves; for this to beseech the Lord; to clear themselves of sin; not to faint in well-doing;" and the like.

Brethren, from your acquaintance with the Scriptures, you will easily perceive that I could run this specimen much farther through the sacred writings; and if you peruse the writings of the most powerful and successful preachers, particularly the Puritan Divines, you will see that they herein imitated the great leaders of the Christian profession; and were large in their particular application to several sorts of persons; suiting their discourses to all the variety of the hearts of men, and sorts and frames of Christians, according to the precepts of Christianity, and, I may add, of true oratory. In this way they found their own hearts warmed, and thus they reached the hearts of their hearers; whilst many were imagining the minister had been told of their case, and made the sermon for them; and so was verified that passage: "The word of God is quick and powerful, a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart."

Now, what success can we reasonably expect, if we do not take into close consideration the cases of our several spiritual patients? If a man, professing physic, should administer or prescribe one constant medicine for fevers, and another for consumptions, and so for other distempers, without considering the age, constitution, strength, and way of living of his patient, and not vary his method and medicines as those vary, we



should hardly call this the regular practice of physic. Nor can I think this general and undistinguishing way will be more safe, or likely to answer its end, in divinity than in medicine.

Now I rest persuaded, brethren, the thing is so evident, you can not but allow it is best to suit ourselves to all the variety of tempers and experience of the hearers, if it can be done; and I hope some thoughts may be successfully offered upon the way how this skill may be attained.

1. Above all, then, carefully study your own hearts, and preach over the ruder sketches of your sermons to yourselves first; by which means the correspondent workings of your own hearts and affections may furnish you with proper thoughts wherewith to apply closely to all whose temper, experience, and case are like your own: for what is supplied to your imperfect notes, out of the applicatory meditations of your own minds on the subject, will very probably, according to the usual way of the Spirit, happily and powerfully reach those of the same make in like circumstances.

2. But, alas! one man's experience falls far short of all the variety of men's hearts, and of the Spirit's work; nay, those whose heads are turned for close and regular thought, and whose time has been spent in study and letters, as they go on more rationally and evenly in religion, have less variety of experience than many of a different mould and way of thinking. Here it will be needful then to look out of ourselves, and take a large view, in order to be acquainted with cases and tempers different from our own; and with such methods of the Spirit's work as we ourselves have never experienced, but many others have. Now the best and original way of getting this acquaintance with men, and with God's workings in them (and I may add, of Satan's workings also) is by conversing freely with the serious people of our flock.

I know your thoughts will prevent me with an objection; you will say: This is almost impracticable, especially amongst persons of politeness and figure; these, alas! too rarely will use any such freedom with us, in laying open their hearts, and communicating their experience to us, as may give us the needful information. If we ever do arrive at any acquaintance with the experience of Christians, little thanks are due to such as these; they expect we should preach suitably to them, and that with as much reason as Nebuchadnezzar demanded of the wise men to interpret a dream they knew not. The middle and

lower sort of people, indeed, are more unreserved to grave ministers of age and standing, but will hardly use the same freedom with young men.

To help you over this difficulty, I would observe, that as for the polite, and men of some thought and reading, your own experience, with the allowances and corrections a moderate skill in human nature will enable you to make, may lead you into happy conjectures at their way of thinking. Besides, in the time of their visitation, under some sore affliction, you will find them more communicative; and an hour's free discourse with such as can give a rational and intelligible account of themselves, in a season when they are disposed to do it, is as valuable and useful as it is rare and difficult to enter into.

3. Again, have an eye upon the serious youth, whom nature and Providence has designed to place in a superior class; and especially at a time when the impressions of religion are new to them. You will find them more open than elder persons, if you court their intimacy, and relieve their bashfulness; and if you can see into the heart of a youth, then, with the proper allowances for alterations that age and business will make, you may pretty well guess at their turn of mind in more advanced years.

4. With the generality of serious and more advanced Christians, there needs not so much nicety to get into such a spiritual intimacy with them as we desire; the laying aside of nicety and ceremony, and getting into such a grave good-natured way as our character requires, is more than half-way to our purpose. Where this is insufficient to encourage the people to freedom, lead them into it by communicating first; either what yourselves have experienced, under the name of a third person (if modesty or prudence require it) or else what you have learned from others, without betraying the confidence they have put in you. By these methods we shall seldom fail of drawing serious people on to such a freedom as will be of use to them and ourselves. If we heartily go about it, we are pretty sure to succeed.

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amongst those whom nature has formed alike, you will find upon further inquiry, a striking uniformity in the Spirit's work and way of proceeding with them.

6. I might recommend a way of knowing these things at second hand, namely, from the most popular and experimental authors; but this way is far inferior to the other: we shall but faintly paint any phenomenon of the heart, by copying another picture; it is infinitely preferable to do it from the life. Yet would I earnestly recommend the perusal of such authors as deal much in an experimental strain, and have been very successful in it; but with a different design, namely. That we may learn from them, how to describe, in a discreet and lively manner, such cases as we ourselves have observed; and how to address properly to those cases, with the like thoughts and expressions, as have in the course of their preaching happily answered the end.

After all, rightly to divide the word of truth, with true wisdom, is a matter of no small difficulty; but if we carefully and diligently go about it, with a zeal for our Master's interest, and sensible of our own insufficiency, asking wisdom of God, we know he giveth liberally, and will surely make us wise to win souls, to the honor of his name, and our own rejoicing in the day of the Lord Jesus. To whom, with the Father and Holy Spirit, that one God whom we adore, be paid the highest honors and praises to eternal ages. Amen.

# PROPRIETY OF A MINISTERIAL ADDRESS TO THE UNCONVERTED.

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You have been told, that repentance and faith are spiritual acts, for the performance of which, a principle of spiritual life is absolutely necessary; and that therefore, to exhort an unregenerate sinner to repent or believe, must be as vain and fruitless as to call a dead person out of his grave. To this it may be answered, that we might cheerfully and confidently undertake even to call the dead out of their graves, if we had the command and promise of God to warrant the attempt; for then we might expect his power would accompany our word. The vision of Ezekiel, chap. 37, may be fitly accommodated to illustrate both the difficulties and the encouragement of a gospel minister. The deplorable state of many of our hearers may often remind us of the Lord's question to the prophet, "Can these dry bones live?" Our resource, like that of the prophet, is entirely in the sovereignty, grace, and power of the Lord: "O Lord, thou knowest," impossible as it is to us, it is easy for thee to raise them unto life; therefore we renounce our own reasonings; and though we see that they are dead, we call upon them at thy bidding, as if they were alive, and say, "O ye dry Bones, hear the word of the Lord!" The means is our part, the work is thine, and to thee be all the praise. The dry bones could not hear the prophet; but while he spoke, the Lord caused breath to enter into them, and they lived; but the word was spoken to them considered as dry and dead.

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"Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am free from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God."—Acts 20 : 26, 27.

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FROM THE

# REFORMED PASTOR.

BY RICHARD BAXTER.

Take heed therefore to yourselves, and to all the flock over which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the Church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.—Acts 20 : 28.

LET us set before us the exhortation, and the example given in our text and context, and learn our duty from thence. This one passage of scripture better deserves a whole year's study, than most things about which students are apt to spend their time. O brethren, write it on your study doors, or set it as your copy, in capital letters, continually before your eyes. Could we but learn two or three lines of it, what preachers should we be! Here we are taught—Our general business; *serving the Lord*—Our special work; *taking heed to ourselves and all the flock*—The substance of our doctrine; *repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ*—The places and manner of our teaching; *publicly, and from house to house*—The object and internal manner; *warning every one, night and day, with all humility of mind, and with tears*—The faithfulness and integrity that are requisite; *I have kept back nothing that was profitable unto you; I am pure from the blood of all men, for I have not shunned to declare the whole counsel of God*—The innocence and self-denial to be used; *I have coveted no man's silver or gold*—The patience and resolution to be exercised; *none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus*—And once more, the motives to engage us to all this; *the Holy Ghost has made us overseers; the Church we feed is the Church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.*

Write this upon your hearts, and it will do yourselves and the Church more good than twenty years' study of those lower things which often employ your thoughts; which, though they get you greater applause in the world, yet, if separated from these, will make you but "sounding brass, and tinkling cymbals."

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"If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed. For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ."—GAL. 1 : 9.

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